

Message Text

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44

ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-04

RSC-01 USIA-15 PRS-01 SPC-03 OPR-02 OMB-01 COME-00

EB-11 LAB-06 SIL-01 DOTE-00 AID-20 PC-04 CG-00 FMC-04

PM-07 NSC-10 SS-20 DRC-01 /134 W

----- 068357

R 211120Z DEC 73

FM AMCONSUL MADRAS

TO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 2433

AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, ETRN, IN

SUBJ: RAIL STRIKE

REF: NEW DELHI 14979

1. SOUTHERN RAILWAY OFFICIALS SAY THEY HAVE ONLY FIVE DAYS STOCK OF RAILWAY COAL AND ARE ECONOMIZING USE TO STRETCH TO EIGHT DAYS. TWO SHIPLOADS COAL FROM CALCUTTA EXPECTED AT TUTICORIN PORT TODAY FOR USE IN THAT AREA.

2. TO CONSERVE STOCKS AND MAINTAIN MOVEMENT OF ESSENTIAL GOODS AND TRAFFIC ON MAIN ARTERIAL ROUTES, SOUTHERN RAILWAY HAS CANCELLED 21 OUT OF 48 DAILY EXPRESS TRAINS AND SOME PASSENGER AND NON-ESSENTIAL GOODS SERVICES ON MAIN AND BRANCH LINES. DIESEL LOCOMOTIVES HAVE REPLACED COAL BURNERS ON 6 TRAINS.

3. RAILWAY OFFICIALS CLAIM THAT MOVEMENT OF FOODGRAINS, PETROLEUM PRODUCTS, AND INDUSTRIAL COAL GIVEN PRIORITY AND IS NORMAL SO FAR. THEY CITE MOVEMENT OF 200 WAGONS FOODGRAINS TO KERALA AND RECEIPT

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223 WAGONLOADS OF INDUSTRIAL COAL FROM EASTERN INDIA YESTERDAY.

4. RAILWAY OFFICIALS ALSO CLAIM MOVEMENT OF GOODS TO AND FROM WESTERN AND CENTRAL INDIA NEARLY NORMAL. SAY DIFFICULTY IS IN MOVEMENT TO AND FROM NORTHERN AND ESPECIALLY EASTERN INDIA. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE CONTACTS SAY COAL DELIVERIES NEVER SATISFACTORY IN BEST OF TIMES, AND SO FAR THEY HAVE HEARD COMPLAINTS RESULTING FROM RAIL STRIKE ONLY FROM CEMENT INDUSTRY. HOWEVER, IF SUPPLY OF RAIL AND INDUSTRIAL COAL FROM EASTERN INDIA IS CUT BACK MUCH MORE, POSITION COULD BECOME VERY DIFFICULT.

5. SO FAR, LOCO STAFF IN SOUTH NOT INVOLVED IN AGITATION. RAILWAY OFFICIALS CONTEND SOUTHERN WORKERS MORE DISCIPLINED THAN THEIR NORTHERN BROTHERS AND CAN CERTAINLY NOT BE EXPECTED TO STRIKE UNTIL AFTER JANUARY 1 PAYDAY DURING THIS FESTIVAL SEASON. OFFICIALS GUESSING EVEN THEN STRIKE UNLIKELY UNLESS SOMETHING DRASTIC HAPPENS SUCH AS GOVERNMENT ARRESTING UNIO LEADERS.

6. AGREE WITH DELHI OBSERVATION THAT AIR AND RAIL STRIKES CRIPPLING INDIA'S TRANSPORT SYSTEM, AND WOULD ONLY ADD THAT LAST FEW DAYS DEVELOPMENTS WITH RESPECT TO COSTS OF SHIPS BUNKERS ADDS THREAT OF STRANGLING DOMESTIC WATER TRANSPORTATION.
EAVES

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